

Serial No.: 10/082,141

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A ceramic honeycomb extrusion apparatus comprising:

a biaxial screw portion, a flow regulation portion, a foreign substance removal portion, and an extrusion portion having upstream and downstream ends, wherein the flow regulation portion comprises a diameter reducing portion, a cylinder portion; and a diameter expanding portion located at said downstream end of said extrusion portion, wherein:

(1) an inlet shape of the diameter reducing portion adjacent the biaxial screw portion, ~~which~~ is congruent to an outlet shape of the biaxial screw portion;

(2) an outlet shape of the diameter reducing portion adjacent the cylinder portion, ~~which~~ is congruent to an inlet shape of the cylinder portion;

(3) an inlet shape of the diameter expanding portion adjacent the cylinder portion, ~~which~~ is congruent to an outlet shape of the cylinder portion; and

(4) an outlet shape of the diameter expanding portion adjacent the foreign substance removal portion, ~~which~~ is

Serial No.: 10/082,141

congruent to an inlet shape of the foreign substance removal portion, wherein the flow regulation portion comprises a cassette mechanism comprising a detachable inner portion for regulating flow of material being extruded ~~therethrough~~, therethrough, and said cassette mechanism is detachable from said ceramic honeycomb extrusion apparatus without removal of said diameter expanding portion.

2.-3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently Amended) A method for forming a ceramic honeycomb, comprising extruding a green ceramic material through a ceramic honeycomb extrusion apparatus comprising:

(1) an inlet shape of the diameter reducing portion adjacent the biaxial screw portion, ~~which~~ is congruent to an outlet shape of the biaxial screw portion;

(2) an outlet shape of the diameter reducing portion adjacent the cylinder portion, ~~which~~ is congruent to an inlet shape of the cylinder portion;

Serial No.: 10/082,141

(3) an inlet shape of the diameter expanding portion adjacent the cylinder portion, ~~which~~—is congruent to an outlet shape of the cylinder portion; and

(4) an outlet shape of the diameter expanding portion adjacent the foreign substance removal portion, ~~which~~—is congruent to an inlet shape of the foreign substance removal portion, wherein the flow regulation portion comprises a cassette mechanism comprising a detachable inner portion for regulating flow of material being extruded ~~therethrough. therethrough,~~ and said cassette mechanism is detachable from said ceramic honeycomb extrusion apparatus without removal of said diameter expanding portion.